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ABSTRACT

If we do not fundamentally alter roles and relationships within the school, we will fail to educate large numbers of our pupils. The directions to take should be evident after we describe what we want the student to do when he faces the dilemmas of life. Then one may determine the necessary instructional strategies. Those strategies depend on certain teaching behaviors and skills that can be described. Since organization is an important tool for facilitating the behaviors of teachers, one may design the organization to enhance the desired teaching. In schools, the functions of the principal are vital for building such an organization. This reasoning could also extend to other positions, such as the superintendent, and to other agencies, such as the graduate school, that all share the responsibility for the outcomes of schooling. (Author/JG)

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SCHOOLS FOR EDUCATING RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS FOR 2000 A.D.

by
William W. Wayson

We must examine what schools do and change any of it that is necessary to serve pupils who will be working, voting, and rearing families in the year 2000.

The key change is to have everyone in the school do things differently from what they typically do. The roles of teacher, principal, and student must be played differently. The purposes for which schools exist have changed and the old roles are the most intransigent obstacles to new goals; yet, educational plans for change seldom include intensive efforts to change what people think they are supposed to do in their role. The death of innovative practices in the 1950's and 60's proved that point. What we wanted to accomplish changed; the building changed, some of the tools changed--but the teacher and the principal were still geared to grind out the old product. What was produced is closer to the old product than to any new expectation. If we do not fundamentally alter roles and relationships within the school, we will fail to educate large numbers of our pupils.

Deciding what to do is easier if we follow the logical sequence depicted in Figure I. The directions to take should seem evident after we describe what we want the student to do when he faces the dilemmas of life. Then one may determine the instructional strategies necessary to develop graduates who can and will function in those ways. Those strategies depend upon certain teaching behaviors and skills which can be described. Since organization is an important tool for facilitating the behaviors of teachers, one may design the organization to enhance the teaching that is desired. In schools the functions of the principal are vital for building such an organization. The reasoning could extend to other positions, such as the superintendent, and to other agencies, such as the graduate school, because all of these share responsibility for the outcomes of schooling. The influences among all these factors are complex, but the simplified figure should help us see that events which are widely separated in time and space can be closely interrelated, just as one farmhouse dumping its sewage into a mountain stream can spread typhoid in a city far away.

Characteristics of the School's Product: Effective Adults

Schools tend to be without goals. Like all organizations, they tend to focus upon means and not ends, and our reason for doing things comes to be, "That is the way we've always done it." We have not specified what it is we hope to accomplish; hence we accomplish little and have no way of organizing to accomplish more. We need to ask what are we trying to produce?

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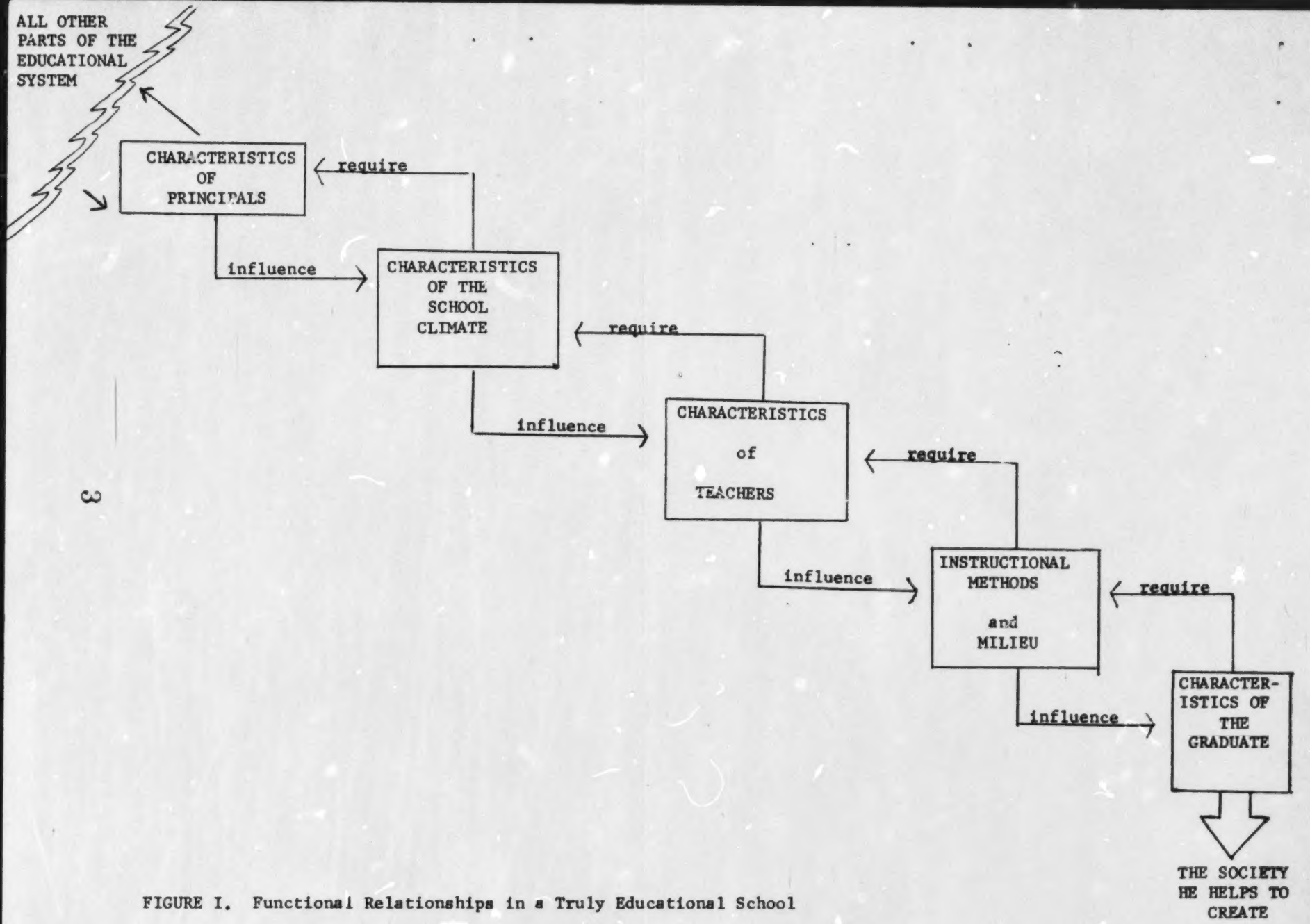

FIGURE I. Functional Relationships in a Truly Educational School

The demands of the next twenty-five years, the predictable needs of society, make it imperative that our schools produce mature adults who can stand confidently, participate fully and learn continually in their world. The responsible citizen-adult has the independence, the freedom and the skills to approach his world as a series of surmountable problems over which he has some control. He has the ability to recognize and choose from a wide variety of alternatives, and to accept fully the consequences of and responsibility for his actions. He has the ability to adapt to changing conditions. He recognizes that "truth" is evolutionary and unstable; thus, he acts upon the knowledge that learning is a continuous life time process. All students have ability to develop these skills for more productive citizenship, and the school is responsible for developing them in all students.

My way of describing these outcomes is to describe one of the dilemmas in which real people find themselves and then ask the question, "How would I want a person to behave under those circumstances?" For example, let's examine the following incident:

> Your student becomes a worker in an automobile factory. His boss implements a production procedure that causes the cars to have clear potential for brake failure and the worker is aware of the danger.

Whatever the answer to the question, "What do you want your graduate to do under those circumstances?" it is a statement of a goal for our school. The goals that result from questions such as these are obviously of greater social and personal consequence than those we typically use to guide curriculum development.

Instructional Strategies

If one accepts goals that foster individual competence for living in a complex society, he then determines the nature of instructional strategies that will promote learning such goals. Those strategies must be designed to engage the student in the types of behavior we wish him to learn, and they must be evaluated on whether they lead students to engage in those behaviors.

Such strategies involve the student in an active way to learn processes that enable him to exercise the initiatives of responsible citizenship without losing either his own unique personality or his sense and will for controlling his own destiny. He must explore the world to resolve problems that are relevant to him. He must learn to collect information, explore alternatives, make choices and accept consequences. The curriculum no longer gives disproportionate attention to content but emphasizes processes for applying knowledge. It no longer acts as though the school possesses "Truth" or has omniscient intellectual authority.

Instruction takes advantage of the fact that students are already living in a world filled with real life problems that are analogous to the problems they will face in the adult world. The best way to learn to live in the future is to learn to live in today and to practice skills that will be useful for future situations. The life within the school provides both curriculum content and methodology. It can be used to place the student in situations as nearly as possible like the situation in which he is to behave as an adult. He must also participate in many real activities that take place outside the classroom (which may be regarded as the least educational place in our society). Certainly instruction cannot be limited to classrooms, but must utilize the entire community (or even region) as a learning laboratory.

Teaching Behaviors and Skills

What is to be expected of the teacher who is to devise effective teaching strategies? The teacher's learning occurs within principles that are the same as those governing students. The teacher must devise strategies if they are to be effective; they cannot be imposed upon him. That requires a variety of behaviors that are rare in the present teaching role.

It seems obvious that a childish teacher will not promote adulthood; therefore, we would strive to have teaching behaviors as near as possible like those to be developed in the graduate. The teacher should be someone who can engage in an adult behavior; who is a problem-solver; who can be responsible for his choices.

The teacher must become responsible for the outcomes of his instructional decisions. He must feel the need to find effective strategies and must be accountable if the results are not what was anticipated. The present excuses -- poor parents, bad homes, low motivation, no ability, bad administration, no money, large class sizes -- must be seen as part of the decision process and not as final determinants of educational outcomes.

Teachers cannot be responsible until they are personally involved in making determinative decisions about the means they use to teach. They should not ever be forced to take a textbook or a curriculum guide from the school district or the state. Such guides are possibly the greatest deterrent to effective instruction in our schools, not because they themselves are bad but because they may prevent analysis of learning needs, restrict methodological creativity, and serve as an alternative to responsible teaching behavior.

The teacher should have intelligence. Existing research tends to show little relationship between intelligence and teaching effectiveness, but that research is based upon the present role. A more responsible role will demand basic intelligence.

The teacher must be open to feedback. This is an adult characteristic vital to improving instruction. Criticism must be elevated from its present negative valence to be welcomed as a positive contribution to personal and profession fulfillment. The teacher will be freed from the debilitating expectation that he never makes or admits a mistake, that he always does the correct thing. He will also be free from the need to defend his "divine right" authority; thus, free to win respect for his ideas, his demeanor, or his own learning skill.

These requirements constitute a new role for teachers who will comprise a corps of truly professional educators. The new role will include at least these functions, all of which require wholly new approaches to selecting and training teachers:

1. The new teacher will work as often with adults as with children. He will work with other teachers for curriculum planning, school management, problem solving, and professional development. He will initiate educational liasion with parents. He will meet with other citizens to co-ordinate school-community activities relevant to the school program, to secure aid from other agencies, to maintain an educational presence whenever public policy is made, to prevent stagnation and to overcome the isolation between educators and other segments of society.

2. The new teacher, usually in conjunction with a team of colleagues and assistants, will make most of the decisions that determine his role. The teacher must have the control and direction over space, time, personnel and material used in the course of instruction.

3. The new teacher with a team of peers will co-ordinate the activities of a variety of school personnel who contribute to the development and operation of mutually-derived educational programs for the pupils served by the total team. He decides how to utilize reading consultants, guidance counselors and other specialists (including the principal) in order to maximize desired learnings.

4. The new teacher will be highly skilled in the art and science of working with human groups--peers, children and community members.

5. The new teacher will devote as much time to planning, co-ordinating, and developmental activities as to direct classroom teaching.

6. The new teacher will be skillful in providing diagnosis and treatments for learning deficiencies.

7. The new teacher will seek continual growth in real knowledge about his functions and will spend about one-tenth of his time in searching for new knowledge relevant to some diagnosis or treatment.

8. The new teacher will have a confident self-image and will earn the respect of other citizens for applying his knowledge and skill to make a contribution to the total life of the community.

9. The new teacher will belong to powerful organizations that will control selection, training, and inservice development in the profession. These organizations will exercise strong discipline over their members to assure high quality service to the client.

Organizational Characteristics

The ideal educational organization must strive for optimum involvement on the part of every member of the staff. "Striving" requires a more active organizational stance than does the traditional word "permit."

The responsible school will state its goals and will enforce achieving those goals. Only an organization with goals can define instruction, methodologies, problems, and solutions. Clearly specified goals impose responsibility upon faculty members and give everyone a sense of direction and movement.

A productive organization creates a climate in which teachers can engage in problem-solving and will take responsibility for their actions. A sine-qua-non of a problem-solving organization, of course, is that it has a climate within which it is acceptable to have problems. Failure is accepted, and it is utilized as a step toward problem-solution. An experimenter who does not feel free to face the possibility of failure will not attempt untried solutions. He must feel free to analyze a failure in order to plan an ultimately successful solution. The school should change from a place in which everyone must succeed to one in which everyone feels free to try.

Divergent-thinking is fostered in the problem-solving school. The real problems of the school and the failure of its traditional processes have been hidden for so long that effective solutions can be derived only from atypical processes. Restrictions--perceived and real--must be eliminated or reduced from their present mythical proportions.

The new school fosters risk-taking, open-feedback, and trust building. It is a school in which people can and will stick out their necks. It is an organization in which people can and will provide and accept open feedback about what they are doing. That requires a high level of trust which is fostered best when the divine right authority concept that permeates the present system gives way to Jeffersonian principles. Productive implementation of those principles requires open communications in all directions. Typical school organizations severely restrict communicating, consequently, they inhibit the participation that is the basis of the proposed new school. Such a school must tolerate tension. Problem-solving both arises from and generates tension. The goal of the organization is not high morale but constructive tension.

The school must be resource-gathering. It cannot depend upon the system alone to provide the necessary resources, but must actively seek inputs from a variety of internal and external sources, using far more aggressive techniques than we now see in schools. Consequently the school will be open to outside influences. Schools presently lack much of the creativity and the knowledge to solve their problems; to do so, they must seek new and fresh resources. Insularity is incompatible with responsibility, creativity, problem-solving and education.

The organization must be self-renewing. New members have to be assimilated with a minimum of loss in momentum or productivity. Until teachers' colleges and recruitment procedures can provide teachers who can perform the new role, the organization must have internal processes for developing each newcomer de novo.

The Principal's Role

In almost every school, the principal will play a key role for developing the organization as a tool for achieving institutional goals, and to have knowledge of how to develop and use organization to foster desired teacher and pupil behaviors.

This administrator has to utilize effective strategies for gaining outputs from teachers that will foster education for children. He has to have skills for working with adults and for enabling teachers to behave responsibly. If he is unable to engage in mature relationships, he is unable to administer a staff of adults.

The principal must have a program or he must appear to have a program. The aura of "knowing what he is doing" is invaluable for building personal security and is essential for infusing security and direction into an organization. It gains necessary confidence from staff, superiors and constituents.

The principal must protect his teachers from the constraints that now prevent their becoming the teachers who can function in the new school. He enables them to experiment and to utilize failure constructively. He protects them from other school personnel who claim to have superior traits. In fact, the principal will be more highly taxed to protect his staff from forces within the school system than from without. He can't be seeking it, he must have it; and no one can give it to him.

The principal serves his staff as a resource gatherer. He has to develop his own lines and sources of supply. He cannot wait for the system to move at its own pace, particularly in districts which are incredibly slow and stingy. He is able to develop rewards for the types of behaviors required in the new school. He must generate and utilize a variety of non-monetary values within the school. He allocates them in ways that supplant the mediocrity encouraged by single salary scales and single-status teaching positions.

Above all, the principal in the truly educational organization is a risk taker. He cannot fear for his job or his personal security. He does not look for permission to educate or for the methodology to do so. He unabashedly presents the school's problems to staff, superiors and citizens. He does not quail before the public nor collapse for the first critic. The principal will have to weigh and re-direct criticisms and suggestions, interpreting objectively and resisting the temptation to act precipitately. He must know--through knowledge and intuition--when not to act.

Extensions of the Model

This line of thinking may be extended to describe desired changes in central office positions, teacher and administrative training strategies, college organizations, and university administration. It also applies to state departments of education. The new school will be more effective when those are changed; however, it must be emphasized that the functions discussed above can be accomplished within a school building; thus they may be implemented without the full change having taken place throughout the educational system. For any individual student, of course, an educational system is only as effective as his interaction with an individual teacher; thus all changes must be directed toward the ultimate objective of improving that interaction.

Postscript

Society has changed in ways that outstrip the school system. Nothing less than a major alteration of the system will enable

education to meet new societal requirements. Whether a system can change itself is debatable, but educators may use the thoughts above as a basis for change. Schools are presently in jeopardy in our large cities; their inability to educate is patently visible there. Once the public has discovered fully that schools are failing in large cities, it will disaffect itself of the sacredness of schools and will begin to examine their functioning everywhere. The force of public opinion thus aroused will bring basic changes in our system of education with or without the cooperation of those who profess to be educators.